



SPADES AND CLUBS



U.S. NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION TWO FIVE

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New Medical Facility for Coalition Forces

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LtGen John Sattler, Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central, Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force, hands a section of medical gauze, (used during the ribbon cutting ceremony), to Commander David Marasco, Commanding Officer of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25), during the dedication of a new medical center in Al Anbar Province. The location and design of the new facility will cut patient transport times by over six minutes.

AL TAQADDUM, Iraq – A state of the art medical facility opened for business in early August. Marines, Soldiers, Seabees and Navy medical staff workers gathered to witness and celebrate the dedication. The joint project included work by Navy, Marine Corps, and Army personnel, although the Seabees invested the most resources and time on the project.

LCDR Mark Gould, Orthopedic Surgeon at the Taqaddum surgical unit and project officer, said the new facility would increase the level of care the medical staff could provide its patients.

Gould was especially appreciative of the long hours and hard work the Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25), Fort McCoy, Wis., contributed to this project. The Seabees of NMCB-25 worked everyday of the week for three months to complete the project. Gould personally thanked CDR David Marasco, Commanding Officer of NMCB-25, during his speech and said “they responded to our needs to give us this wonderful facility that has so much potential to provide better care for the wounded Marines, Sailors, Airmen and Soldiers.”

The new facility features many improvements for the patients and staff including better climate control,

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CDR David Marasco
CEC, USN

Commanding Officer

Family and Friends of NMCB-25; as I write you today, I want to tell you how excited and happy I am for all of you to finally have your loved ones home. Our last group from Task Force Sierra arrived safely on 12 October. The demobilization process went surprisingly well and our Seabees were out the door on their way home in just a matter of a few short days. There is;

however, and few of us whose Seabees are in a medical hold status awaiting care and I ask that you be as patient as possible with the process. I know it is frustrating, as I too am on medical hold and equally as anxious to get done and home for good.

September 22nd I was pleased to conduct our Transfer of Authority with CDR Dean Gould, the Commanding Officer, of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Eighteen. This marked the end of our six-month deployment in Western Iraq, as I was relieved of "Operational Control in Theater". With great sadness I regret to inform you that NMCB-18 has suffered the horrible loss of one of their own to a roadside bomb last week. Please join me in prayer for the family of CE2 Charles Komppa, the families of the Marines who died with him, and all the men and women of NMCB-18 to give them the strength and courage to persevere and continue moving forward.

I cannot tell you how proud I am of your Seabees and their historic accomplishments. I have been truly honored and humbled to have served as their Commanding Officer during this deployment. They have exceeded all my expectations and then some. I just want to briefly touch on a few of their accomplishments:

Repaired two major bridges, drilled three water wells, completed repairs on three major airfields, improved the quality of life at multiple Battalion Outposts for Marines in the area, repaired over 250 craters, hauled thousands of cubic meters of rock, constructed multiple wood frame structures, renovated thousands of square feet of living quarters, completed over 6000 camp maintenance work orders and traveled over 20,000 miles delivering materials to multiple project sites.

On top of all the hard work accomplished, your Seabees also found the time to take care of their personal warfare qualifications in both the Seabee Combat Warfare (SCW) and the Fleet Marine force Warfare (FMF) programs. Remarkably they earned over 190 SCW and over 40 FMF pins.

I also wanted share with you the news of the trip that Master

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BACKGROUND PHOTO: A close look at the teeth of a well-drilling head used by Seabees to drill water wells in Iraq.

BACK COVER: A plaque created and signed by Seabees remains with coalition forces at an Iraqi battle position.

"Spades and Clubs" is U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two-Five official newsletter and is an authorized publication for members of the military service and their families. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official views of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Navy, or the command, and does not imply endorsement thereby.

Story submissions are encouraged from each detachment and Specialty Unit, but there is no guarantee each will be represented in every newsletter.

Your comments, correspondence, and questions, may be addressed to NMCB 25 Public Affairs, NMCB 25 Main Body, FPO AP 96601-5113.

Chief Benzinger, Chaplin Muschinske and I went on to visit the families of our fallen heroes and our recovering wounded. All the families visited were very appreciative and thankful and spoke well of the support that they have received from everyone. All visited are anxious to hear from you, so don't hesitate to call and say hi. From my perspective it was a wonderful trip and precious time well spent.

Finally, I will tell you that you have every reason to be extremely proud of your Seabees, as I am; not only have they done it right, they truly made a difference, and as I said earlier I am very humbled by their dedication, perseverance, and unwavering devotion to duty under the most arduous conditions. For Gary, Jaime, and Jerry; may their memory live on in our hearts and minds for an eternity.

Thank you and have a safe and joyous holiday season.

Command Master Chief



CMDCM (SCW/FMF) Brian Benzinger

***Editor's note: The Command Master Chief's and Command Chaplain's letters were written for an earlier release date, but are included in this edition for continuity.**

As we return from our mission in Iraq and start our warrior transition in Kuwait, it is a time to decompress and focus on our next mission, which is the return to our civilian life back in the states.

Our families will be faced with similar challenges, the transition of reuniting with our heroes upon their return home.

I urge all of you to give your loved ones the time and space to readjust back into their normal lifestyles. This will be a team effort from both sides.

As the anticipation of the flight home grows stronger and spirits rise, I can only sum it up in one phrase that I've said from some of my previous deployments – it's good to be coming home!



NMCB-25 welcomed 14 new chiefs to their ranks in September. CEC (SCW) James Mosley, BUC (SCW) Ward Cheney, EOC (SCW) Richard Nelson, BUC (SCW) Christopher Grzebieniak, EOC (SCW) Richard Tittle, SWC (SCW/SW) Wylie Carroll, EOC (SCW) Michael Larue, GMC (SCW) Vern Quast, HMC (SCW) Kimberly LaFray, EOC (SCW) William Kirsch, UTC (SCW) Darren Kotajarvi. (not pictured: EOC Rory Matter, EOC (SCW/SS) Joseph Lampert, and EOC (SCW) Dan Hollenback.)



CMDCM (SCW/FMF) Brian Benzinger makes the final reenlistment in Iraq with the help of CDR David Marasco shortly before the transfer of authority from NMCB-25 to NMCB-18.



SW1 (SCW) Christopher Husler, Fargo N.D., reenlists. The Navy has taken Husler many places, including being stationed aboard the battleship Wisconsin.

Command Advancement Program

Battalion Commanders have the authority to promote individuals each year following Navy guidelines under the Command Advancement Program (CAP). Commanding Officer David Marasco surprised a few Seabees during this deployment as he unexpectedly promoted them to the next rank.



SK2 Setina Cox



SW3 William Farrow



CE3 (SCW) Jason Nash

Command Chaplain



LCDR Peter Muschinske
CEC, USN

“September” sounds pretty good, doesn’t it? Not that the days seem too much different here yet, but they are shorter, a bit cooler and getting closer and closer to reunion. We haven’t noticed the leaves changing here...actually, we haven’t noticed all that many leaves, period! Hope you’ll take a moment to appreciate the early fall’s smells and sights and many Seabees should be home to join in some of the later experiences of the changing seasons.

The desert certainly has its own beauty. I referred to stars in the last newsletter and the night or early morning sky is often breathtaking. Looking up, we see splendor—be it in the starry skies or changing leaves. Both can be an inspiration for tired bodies and spirits. And we’ve been blessed with another artistic inspiration here too.

BU2 Don Hodory recently completed the awesome feat of transforming a picture in his mind’s eye into an exquisite work of art on display for all who pass through one of the chapels on base. He brought together civilians in the United States (who donated materials) and Seabees, Soldiers and Marines in-theater to make stained glass windows for a chapel.

It is a truly amazing accomplishment, bringing resources together from so far away, overcoming obstacles of space and time to make this happen. True, as wonderful as these windows are, they are not perfect: all of us “lay people” who helped know that! But the multi-colored, varied size and shape pieces have been assembled into a masterpiece.

We are about to re-assemble Seabees with their loved ones, people of varied shapes and sizes, all of us now different from the mosaic that was split apart last winter. Our reunions and reintegration into households, communities, businesses and back into the “drilling reservist” side of the house will not go perfectly. Even those who have done this before will re-learn how much work it takes to relate to one another face to face (where e-mail and phone calls filled the void).

Spouses and co-workers have found ways to fill voids, they have “cross rated” and picked up new skills and confidence. The book of Ephesians says “For we are God’s workmanship” (one translation says “masterpiece”) “created... to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” We have good reason to be proud of ourselves and of each other. I give thanks for the good works you’ve accomplished... and have a great sense of joyful expectation for those still to be done.

HADITHA, Iraq - Seabees and Marines completed a major road repair project in late July. Extensive roadwork was needed after insurgents used improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to destroy a large section of highway and the culverts that ran beneath it.

Throughout this deployment, Seabee road repair crews have continuously improved this area, but culvert operations require much more work. "This was a bigger project," said EOC (SCW/FMF) Kirk Ruetten, project crew leader, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25), Fort McCoy, Wis. "They had planted IEDs in two of the culverts.

The culverts suffered extensive damage and the road surface was destroyed well beyond that." A Seabee and Marine Corps convoy makes its way across Western Iraq. NMCB-25 Seabees repair roads in the area on a regular basis, but heavily damaged culverts require additional planning and work to reconstruct.

A large area of culvert was simply blown away. The massive explosions had pushed one wing-wall aside and pulverized the other. The gaping hole, strewn with loose concrete and jagged rebar, would require hours of preparation before reconstruction could even begin.

A Seabee assessment team decided the project could be completed in three days – if there were no contingencies. Marines of the 9th Engineer Support Battalion (9th ESB), Okinawa, Japan, assisted with security, but they still wanted to limit the number of boots on the ground and the time

spent at the site for security reasons.

Seabees brought enough vehicles to haul welders, torches, a crete (concrete) mobile, sections of prefabricated steel culvert, and tons of concrete mix. Heavy equipment operators also had a backhoe and track excavator at their disposal.

To lessen the amount of heavy equipment required, Seabees built a special flat bucket for the excavator. The new attachment eliminated the need for other tools and allowed the Seabees to efficiently scrape and clean the project site.

Other preparations included using steel pipes and support elements to replace the missing



Seabees use a track excavator to transport a new section of culvert to a project site. Seabees prefabricated steel tubes to match the size of concrete culverts that were still in place. Preplanning by Seabees reduced the number of man-hours required at the job site.

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Seabees, Marines help rebuild Iraq
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concrete culverts. These could be assembled and welded together three times faster than using traditional methods. The Seabees and Marines would need these advantages to overcome the obstacles that lay ahead.

Once the convoy arrived at the main project site, the area was secured and traffic diverted around the perimeter.



A Seabee directs a track excavator operator during site preparation. Extensive roadwork was needed after insurgents used multiple improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to destroy a large section of highway and the culverts that ran beneath it.

3/3 stepped forward once again to guard the site until the concrete had set.

“Some of the missions we perform in Western Iraq with coalition forces are really about rebuilding Iraqi infrastructure,” said LCDR John Jaros, NMCB-25 Operations Officer. Iraqi civilians travel these roads too. IED’s don’t recognize differences in nationality – they take civilian as well as military lives.”

As the Marines of 3/3 stood fast and guarded the site until it could safely support military and civilian traffic, Marines of the 9th ESB and Seabees of NMCB-25 returned to base for much needed rest. For the duration of their deployments and beyond, the road to recovery for Iraq will continue. These crews will return time and time again throughout the Al Anbar Province to help smooth the way for the citizens of Iraq – along separate projects and roadways that in the end, connect us all.



EO1 (SCW) Doug Miller and EO1 Dan Wimme break from culvert operations during the summer heat. Seabees specialized in culvert repair and members of the road repair crew worked together to complete the project ahead of schedule.

New Facility Opens for Coalition Forces
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lighting, and improved access to medical equipment. Key features include a larger triage area, emergency room, four operating areas, two intensive care units, an x-ray lab, dental office, and pharmacy.

Before the ceremony, staff workers stretched medical gauze across the emergency entrance for the ribbon cutting ceremony and set aside trauma shears for the dedication staff. Gould said the trauma shears were symbolic because they are one of the first tools corpsman use to begin treating patients in an emergency.

LtGen John Sattler, Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central, Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif., was among the dignitaries present. Before speaking to the troops,

he turned and presented Marasco with a section of the newly cut gauze from the ribbon cutting ceremony.

"First of all I would like to thank the 'we build, we fight' team for putting this all together," said Sattler. "Just remember here that every Marine, soldier, and Sailor who fights on a battle field, fights...(knowing) that if they are wounded, they will be treated by the best medical care that the world has to offer. 'Cheaters of death' was the motto of the medical team at Camp Fallujah, and I think that's

a great motto for each and every one, to each and every sailor who serves in our medical corps. So, to the cheaters of death, I thank you very much."

After months of hard work for the NMCB-25 Seabees, BU2 John Waldorf, crew leader of the medical facility project, was glad this day had finally arrived. "For the medical facility, it is a huge moment when they could realize their full potential...in getting them (patients) out of the area of operation and off to better medical facilities."

Besides focusing on the internal layout of the new facility, designers also addressed the way in which patients arrive at the site. A new access road and emergency entrance will help speed patients to medical staff workers over six minutes faster than before.



LtGen John Sattler, Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central, Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force, addresses Marines, Seabees and the medical staff of the Navy Surgical Shock Trauma Platoon, Al Taqaddum, Iraq, during a dedication ceremony for a new medical facility. The late June dedication marked the end of major construction on the project by NMCB-25 Seabees. The new facility formally opened in August after final preparations were finished. The medical staff will use the new facility to treat civilian and coalition forces.




BU2 John Waldorf, medical facility project leader, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25), receives congratulatory remarks from Lt. Gen. John Sattler, Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central, Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force, during the dedication ceremony of a new medical center in Al Taqaddum, Iraq. The new facility is an improvement upon existing facilities on the base and includes improved air conditioning, better lighting, and concrete floors.

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“This is a state of the art facility in a combat environment,” said Marasco. “It’s a design that a lot of people put a lot of effort into. Now instead of having to load the patients up in an ambulance and take them to the old facility, the helicopters can land just outside here and the patients can literally be rolled right into the facility and their care can begin immediately.”

“Today is a great day for the quality of care we’re going to be able to render to the wounded Sailors, Marines, soldiers, and airmen coming out of our AOR (Area of Responsibility),” said Gould. “This new fixed facility will allow us to give them a higher level of treatment than was previously being provided in the expeditionary tent environment. I’m honored to have been a part of this project.” 



Seabee, Marine Corps History Repeats Itself

AL ANBAR PROVINCE, Iraq - Marines and Seabees have depended upon each other since the early days of World War II. This working relationship has remained much the same throughout the years, but for the men and women serving in Iraq today, the shared history may seem hauntingly familiar for some, and shockingly new to others.

Seabees units were created during World War II from seasoned tradesman whose construction skills were desperately needed to help win the war. Seabee units today, particularly the Reserve Components, are still composed of older tradesmen, while Marines tend to recruit much younger men and women.

The difference in age between Marines and Seabees is legendary. Historian Stephen Ambrose wrote about an exchange between two young Marines during World War II, in which one Marine cautioned another to be nice to the Seabees – because one of them could be his father.

Most Seabees are well aware of the history, but to many young Marines, the joke and the difference in age may be new and a bit shocking. “There is a big age difference between the Marines and us,” said EO1 Douglas Miller, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25), Fort McCoy, Wis.

The Seabees of today may not feel they are as old as their World War II predecessors, but sometimes the truth hurts. “The funny part is that on the road crew, the Marines say ‘oh, the old men’, and we say, ‘Wait a minute - who’s old?’,” said Miller. “And sometimes they just turn around and awkwardly announce, ‘well - you guys.’”

The average age of the NMCB-25 Seabees is 37, while the Marines of the 9th Engineer Support Battalion is only 20. The difference in age doesn’t affect the mission and is more of a social oddity rather than anything else.



Marines of the 9th Engineer Support Battalion patrol an area of Western Iraq. Marines work closely with Seabee units during reconstruction efforts.

“The 9th is very professional,” said EOC (SCW) Kurt Ruetten, NMCB-25. “They take their job seriously. They have a job to do and we have a job to do. They respect our job and we respect theirs.”

These two units share a common mission and their training often overlaps. “We all have secondary jobs, either motor transport, heavy equipment, or engineering,” said GySgt Anthony Murphy, 9th ESB platoon, Okinawa, Japan.

Murphy takes over the security side of operations for the 9th ESB as they provide protection for the NMCB-25 road repair crew. The units work together rebuilding Iraqi infrastructure.

Although the Marines have engineering training, their mission here relies more heavily upon their extensive combat training. Seabees complement that work by providing

construction skills at an advanced level. Many Seabees work on a wide variety of construction projects professionally in the civilian sector and cross over into combat training as Reserve Components of the military.

By working together, young Marines and older Seabees have the opportunity to observe new military tactics and engineering methods from each other. "We're very impressed by the skills the Seabees have," said Murphy. "They can do many more intricate things than we can in the engineering field, so it's impressive to see them work. We're very proud to support them."


The Marines prepare for their role in the mission as thoroughly as the Seabees do. The 9th ESB has been in Iraq for over six months. During the past four months they've worked with the Seabees on almost every mission. "We make sure the vehicles are prepped," said Murphy. We make sure the weapons are prepped - everything that is vital to the completion of the mission - so that the Seabees can focus on their work and not worry about insurgent threats or the compromising of their security while on the job site."

NMCB-25 road crews rely upon the Marines of the 9th ESB to provide the highest level of protection. "The Marines provide a great comfort factor, but you have to watch out and not become complacent," said Ruetten.

"It's a very dangerous mission," said EO1 Douglas Miller. "I wouldn't lie to you. Yes, we're nervous and scared, but once you get outside the wire and you start work, for some reason the fear factor goes away. The Marines are out there and we're also doing all we can to keep ourselves safe."

Murphy spins up the young Marines and gets them ready to go on each mission. "Being able to come out here...to execute our jobs as rifleman for security, is very fulfilling for us," said Murphy.

Seabees and Marines who have worked together have witnessed first hand each other's capabilities. EA1 (SCW/FMF) Michael McCarty has worked with these Marines during bridge reconnaissance throughout Iraq. "These young Marines are squared away," said McCarty. These Marines are professionals. I'd go anywhere with them."

Young or old, Marine or Seabee, these service members continue their selfless work throughout Western Iraq. In the end, they may be learning first-hand the lessons of Seabees and Marines of long ago, but it is their hard work and sacrifice here that pays homage to, and continues on with the proud tradition of generations past. 



Seabees and Soldiers Create Stained Glass Windows in Iraq

AL ASAD, Iraq – It's a pipe dream. That's what BU2 (SCW/FMF) Donald Hodory, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25) thought as he walked past the site of the new base chapel. He eyed the construction site and wondered if it would ever be possible to create stained glass windows for the building.

Hodory proposed his idea to the Rev. Brian Kane, 67th Area Support Group (67th ASG), but he knew in his heart that the project would be extraordinarily difficult. "I was thinking that I would really like to do this," said Hodory. "But, imagine the logistical problems of getting the glass and lead here, and then finding the time to put all these together – not to mention how I would pay for all of it."

The only reason the idea even occurred to Hodory was that besides being an engineering graduate, he has also pursued his dream of creating stained glass windows. As a college student, Hodory spent his evenings as an apprentice at a production studio in New York City. He worked long hours in exchange for free classes in stained glass production. He has pursued his dream over the years and at one time worked at Conrad Schmitt Studios, Milwaukee, Wis., which is one of the major stained glass studios in the United States. Hodory now owns Atlas Art Glass, an architectural art studio in Woodstock, Ill.

After receiving command approval for the project, Hodory called friends back home and told them that he had an opportunity to make stained glass windows in Iraq. He asked friends to contact the Stained Glass Association of America and suppliers to see if there was anyone interested in donating materials.

Hodory received an email from Gunar Gruenke, owner of Conrad Schmitt Studios, who also happens to be the Vice President of the Stained Glass Association of America. Gruenke and the staff at Conrad Schmitt Studios talked



BU2 (SCW/FMF) Donald Hodory kneels beside the Seabee emblem that is displayed on only one of the 60 stained glass windows created by Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five and soldiers of the 67th Area Support Group. Hodory is a skilled production worker and owns his own stained glass studio in Woodstock Ill.



Rays of the setting sun illuminate newly installed stained glass windows the night before a dedication ceremony for the window project. Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25) and soldiers of the 67th Air Support Group volunteered off-duty hours to complete the project ahead of schedule.

with the Paul Wissmach Glass Company. They agreed to donate the glass and Mayco Industries agreed to provide the lead, which would hold the glass in place.

Ed Hoy's International donated the tools required to build the windows while Conrad Schmitt Studios supplied the pattern making materials and coordinated donations so that Fed Ex could send the materials to Iraq quickly.

In the meantime, pre-production work in Iraq was on hold. "I couldn't really begin work here because I had to see exactly what was donated," said Hodory. When materials arrived, Hodory sketched a design for each type of window; he purposely chose a non-denominational pattern. "The beautiful thing about them is that you can pull from the design anything you want that may help to bolster your

faith,” said Hodory.

The window pattern was an important decision because all faiths are represented at the chapel.

“The beautifying and mosaic effect of so many pieces, shapes, sizes, and colors is representatives of the joint ministry that we do over here, along with the variety of nations, sea services, and soldiers coming together to do this mission,” said LCDR Peter Muschinske, Unit Chaplain for NMCB-25. “It’s an emblem of who we are, and in this case, it’s for the glory of God - and we trust that this mission is somehow going to glorify God as well.”

“The windows are meant to do many things,” said Kane. “With all the different faiths and denominations here, we want the windows to be something that will be acceptable to anyone who walks in the door, so the design is meant to meet that religious requirement. Mainly our goal is to help service members enjoy their freedom of expression of religion and their ability to practice it.”

The addition of stained glass to any building also has a practical effect. “It also makes the atmosphere more of a prayerful place,” said Kane. “It will block all of the outside distractions and hopefully anyone can come in here and perhaps leave their worries or concerns at the door while finding a quite place to pray or worship. We’re hoping that the stain glass windows help people elevate their minds and their hearts.”

Once materials were on hand, window production began with the cutting of the design templates. Hours of production work would go into each window. Anyone could see that the project would take a lot of volunteer hours to complete. The average time it would take to design, pattern, cut, glaze, solder, cement, and install each window was

nearly five hours. With 60 windows to complete, well over 250 man-hours would be needed to finish the project.

Seabees worked outside their normal work hours to create the windows. “I had a little apprenticeship program for Seabees,” said Hodory. “People were cutting glass and then five or six people helped glaze and assemble the windows. Petty Officer Tad Farrell and Petty Officer Joe Ecker glazed and soldered some windows together.”

Work was progressing on schedule for the mid-September dedication ceremony when the Seabees learned that Kane, who was in charge of the chapel’s construction, was leaving Iraq by the end of August – so

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Bruce Medema painted the Seabee emblem that shines brightly through a rear chapel window. The emblem was etched into the glass and kiln fired so that it will remain a permanent marker for all Seabees. Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25) and soldiers of the 67th Area Support Group donated their time to build the windows from the raw materials that were donated and shipped from the U.S.



BU1 (SCW) Tad Farrell, BU2 (SCW/FMF) Donald Hodory, and EO1 (SCW) Joseph Ecker of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25) install a stain glass window at the base chapel. Seabees of NMCB-25 and soldiers of the 67th Air Support Group worked together to complete the project.

Seabees and Soldiers Build Stained Glass Windows in Iraq

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production would have to be ramped up so that Kane could be present for the dedication ceremony.

Solders from the base had already been helping the Seabees, but to meet the new deadline, the team would need an army.

“Chaplain Kane, within our unit, is truly a bright light for us,” said Col. Kenneth Hessler, Commanding Officer of the 67th ASG. “The soldiers migrate to him and he asked for assistance - and they willingly volunteered their time because they appreciate what he does and they appreciate the chapel and what has come to pass here at Al Asad.”

“It’s been gangbusters ever since,” said Hodory. “The Army’s 67th ASG has pretty much single handedly cemented every one of the panels. Father Kane brought a bunch of his guys down here to work for the last three days. We hit it hard and cemented them. I had a tremendous amount of people here who were willing to work. We’ve had almost 60 people volunteer.”

The Seabees and soldiers completed window production on time, but installation was still required. Comparatively, the installation process would go quickly. “That’s where the payoff comes,” said Hodory. “Once you get the windows installed in their resting places then you have the sun coming through them and you can stand back and finally see the fruits of your labor - but the real payoff comes when people come and look at them. There is something about the third dimension of stained glass artwork that allows the light coming through the window, which is constantly changing, to immediately take hold of you when you are looking at it.”

All of the windows were basically alike, with the exception of one. Hodory’s friend, Bruce Medema, painted a Seabee emblem on the glass. “I’m sure it was a painstaking process, which probably took six to eight hours to paint before it was fired in the kiln,” said Hodory. “It turned out beautifully. Only one window has the symbol and it will be placed in the back right window, just as most artists sign their work on the lower right corner of their paintings.”

The decision to include the Seabee logo was made months earlier and is a permanent addition to the windows. “I just really wish I would have had an Army emblem to add to the window now because this has really been a collaborative effort between the Army and the Seabees,” said Hodory. “It allowed this project to be completed two weeks ahead of schedule.”

During the dedication ceremony, the commanding officer of the 67th ASG said the stained glass windows greatly improved the chapel’s atmosphere. “I think this truly becomes a place of sanctuary,” said Hessler. “Where you feel you truly come into the sanctuary of a church and it is like being back home for a few minutes - and I think that, truly they will be grateful for that opportunity.”

During the ceremony, Hessler awarded Hodory the Army Commendation Medal for his efforts. “We appreciate everything the Seabees did, especially Petty Officer 2nd Class Hodory who organized and brought the process together and was able to see his vision to have stained glass windows installed here at our chapel at Al Asad come to pass,” said Hessler.

“It’s certainly an honor and a privilege to recognize one of my hard chargers,” said CDR David Marasco, Commanding Officer of NMCB-25. “Along with efforts from back home and a lot of donations, he made this happen in his spare time, while still doing other very important duties for us. I’m certainly very proud of that. I think it’s a huge morale booster - an individual is allowed to put some of his trade experience to work and it not only boosts the morale of the Seabees, but also the Marines, Soldiers and Airmen in giving them a pleasant place to worship.”



EO1 (SCW) Joseph Ecker of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25) carefully details the stained glass. Nearly 60 soldiers and Seabees volunteered their time to make sure the project was a success and finished two weeks before schedule.

Saving Time by Cutting Time

Seabees need ways to save time on and off the job site. One way the command helps fellow Seabees is by offering access to a barber right on the compound. SH3 Silvia Delgado has had the collateral duty as barber throughout this deployment. SH2 Christopher Jacobs has also been helping – but he is often away on convoy missions, and SH1 Jon Herrig recently joined the ranks as a barber.

Delgado cuts hair three days a week during the afternoons. She sees roughly 12 customers a day. Over a six-month period, she will have supported the mission by completing over 900 haircuts.

Delgado has her beautician's license, but currently she doesn't work in that field.

U.S. Military haircuts have a style all their own and Delgado had to warm up to the new job. "I didn't really like this at first, but now I feel confident and I enjoy doing this for the battalion," said Delgado. "I get a lot of compliments."

Delgado said that the most difficult military haircut for her to create is the flat top, but only a small percentage of customers request this style. Most people ask for the military high and tight, but Delgado likes customers who request the zero, which simply requires cutting everything off.

Delgado takes pride in her job and admits she gets a kick out of seeing people showcasing her work.

"When I first started doing this I thought, oh, I gave that haircut – hey, look at my model, they're modeling my haircut," said Delgado.

The command-sponsored program is strictly free, but Delgado says she gets a little in return from the smiles on faces of her customers. Any tips that are given go directly to the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation fund, which support special needs of the troops.

Recently the barbershop moved across the compound. A new home was reason enough to fix the shack up and give it a new coat of paint.

Because her customers are also her fellow Seabees, Delgado knows that she can have a little fun with them. "Sometime I cut crazy patterns on their heads, said Delgado. "I kind of play around, making circles, stripes, whatever, before I cut it all off."

Delgado knows that staying well groomed is important as a matter of personal hygiene as well as a mark of discipline and military bearing. The three barbers have done a great service to their fellow Seabees and what they have accomplished during this deployment will be remembered in the hearts, photos, and videos of almost everyone attached to NMCB-25.



CS1 (SS) Brad Holcomb receives a haircut from SH3 Silvia Delgado. Over a six-month period, she will have supported the mission by completing over 900 haircuts.



SH2 Christopher Jacobs ensures EO1 Coakley is squared away before they return to their convoy mission.



SH1 Jon Herrig gives BU2 (SCW) Gerry Macias, a captive audience of one, a haircut and a solo singing performance.

Seabees and Marines Ship Toys and Shoes Destined for Iraqi

by BU1 Frederick Schrepfer




Marines and Seabees move a collection of shoes and toys to a military vehicle in preparation for delivery to Regimental Combat Team-7. The material will eventually be delivered to Iraqi children.

Early in the deployment, it was decided by the Al Asad runway joint repair crew to take extra steps in order to make a positive impact on the lives of the people of Iraq. After a short discussion, we decided to collect shoes and toys for the children of Iraq. The crew agreed to contact friends and relatives and organizations back home and ask for donations.

It wasn't any surprise when the donations began to flow in. Some of the items they sent consisted of small stuffed animals, toys, games, sporting goods, books, art supplies and shoes. People back in the states were anxious to help and jumped at the chance to do something good for the kids of Iraq. Donations ranged from a few things sent by individuals to large collections organized by groups.

The First Presbyterian Church of Oshkosh, Wis., organized by Olivia Farrow (SWCN William Farrow's daughter) collected hundreds of shoes. The Aurora Ill. American Legion Band collected boxes of various items at public concerts and Carol Norman, (BU1 Sammy Norman's mother) spearheaded an aggressive shoe drive, which was recognized by her State Representative, and collected over a thousand pairs of shoes.

The Runway Crew delivered the donations to Regimental Combat Team-7, 3rd Civil Affairs Group, Det 1. They screen donations and see that they are delivered to the public. 

The Runway Crew: BU1 Frederick Schrepfer, BU1 (SCW) Michael Ellis, BUC (sel) Christopher Grzebieniak, BU2 Fred Stoaks, BU2 T Dannenberg, BU3 Sean Congdon, BU1 Stephen Burmesch, BU2 (SCW) Mark Rasett, BU2 Cheryl Norris, BU1 Michael McMahon, BU2 Joseph Hardin, BU3 James Sheppard, BU3 Jason Konkle, EO2 Thomas Snyder, SWCN William Farrow, SWCA Hector Parada, BUCS (SCW) Timothy Cooper.



SWCA Hector Parada, BU1 Stephen Burmesch, BUCS (SCW) Timothy Cooper, BU1 Frederick Schrepfer and Marines from Regimental Combat Team-7 pause after moving a shipment of shoes and toys that are destined for Iraqi children.

Seabee Gunner's Mates Support Battalion and More

"Shooting weapons is fun; cleaning them sucks," said GMC (SCW) Vern Quast, NMCB-25 Ordinance Chief. Many who shoot weapons here may echo that statement, but range training is more than a traditional role for gunner's mates and it is still a priority in their schedule.

Quast and GM1 Chad Johnson are experts on the 9MM pistol and the M16 rifle. Quast learned to shoot from the Navy while Johnson learned at a young age from his father.

In Iraq, Johnson and Quast have trained fellow Seabees and members of tenant commands in the proper use of 9MM pistols, M16 rifles, and shotguns. Others benefiting from their training have been hospital corpsman from the 3rd Marine Air Wing, Sailors of VAQ 209, and Marines in the area. "We gotten personal thanks – especially from the Marines and VAQ 209," said Johnson.

Troops in Iraq have learned that sharing resources readily benefits all. "Marines would not have been able to get some of the training they needed done - because there were no ranges available - but they piggy-backed with us," said Johnson. "We were able to get a lot of their junior troops qualified on the 9MM pistol to help them make advancement. In exchange we received training from the Marines and range support."

Johnson said they want troops to know how to shoot a weapon safely and properly for any instance in which

they may need it to protect themselves and others. "We're hoping they walk away with the knowledge of how to use it, how to operate it correctly, and if the weapon malfunctions in any way, that they are proficient enough that they can clear it and continue on with the fight."

The gunner's mates also want the troops to achieve weapons familiarization on the range. An average of 40 people trained each week at the range. In addition to individual training, Quast and Johnson provided support to convoy teams on the range, including M240 Bravo and .50 caliber machine gun training.

Theses gunner's mates complete a monthly check on the crew served weapons, such as the M240 Bravo machine gun, that are used at the training areas. Besides running preventive maintenance checks on these weapons, they

also check each weapon before it goes out to the range and after it has come back and been cleaned.

"Being a gunner's mate is satisfying because I get to teach someone about something that I enjoy myself," said Johnson. "Shooting is a competition with yourself - to shoot better each time. Being able to teach others to shoot, and to shoot even better, motivates me."

Quast and Johnson have more to do than just range training and their schedules have been full ever since they arrived in Al Asad.



GMC Vern Quast and GM1 Chad Johnson pause during a preventative inspection of weapons at Al Asad.



Members of VAQ 209 receive training on the M240 Machine gun from GM1 Chad Johnson on a range in the Iraqi desert.



HM2 Jonathon Auger fires a three-round burst from an M16 rifle during range training in Western Iraq. Seabee Gunner's Mates help members of the battalion maintain weapons proficiency during Reserve and active duty status.

Seabees Gunner's Mates Support Battalion and More,

continued from page 15

"Our biggest things in theatre are weapons maintenance, inventory, and training," said Johnson. "Most of what we get are service calls. People come in and say their weapons malfunctioning. We'll take a look at it and find out what's wrong with it. Sometimes it's a minor malfunction and sometimes we need to replace parts."

Another responsibility that keeps these gunner's mates running is convoy support for the Army, Marines, different Seabee battalions, and of course their own convoy teams. Between the branches, they may have to support over 14 convoys a week.

Each departing convoy needs to have their weapons secured while they sleep, and each


convoy must re-inventory their weapons upon re-issue. "One of the hardest things is the lack of sleep," said Johnson. "You have to get your work done and get to bed so that when the convoys show up you are ready for them."

Convoys arrive at all hours of the night. The rumble of diesel engines and heavy equipment braking is a not so subtle hint of their arrival. "The sleep rotation has been regular, but short," said Johnson. "You constantly try and work your schedule around that. Convoys have left here and had to come back due to weather or equipment problems."

Sometimes missions are shut down shortly after departure and the process of weapons stowage begins all over again. Weapons are a grave responsibility and lives depend upon their safekeeping. "You work with the person that is in charge of the convoy team so that two person integrity is followed during weapons handling and storage," said Johnson.

Besides safeguarding weapons for convoys, the gunner's mates also offer assistance if weapons aren't functioning properly. "We support the convoys and the other branches as one," said Johnson. If they are out on the road and they get hit by an

improvised explosive device, or if they drop their weapon while transiting from point A to point B, then we will fix their weapon if need be. Basically we run a 24/7 armory."

As late evening arrives, the sound of diesel engines and grinding brakes are heard once again outside the armory. A large convoy of Seabees from another battalion has just arrived and need a safe place to store their weapons. The gunner's mates appear at the ready and the melding of the day and night shift begins once more. 



LTJG Merl Trimpe and LT Steve Sherman man an M240 Bravo machine gun during weapons training. Besides working with members of their own battalion, Seabee gunner's mates assist other branches of the military to ensure our troops maintain weapons proficiency.

Crusty the “Snowman”

by BU1 Fred Schrepfer, project leader Al Asad runway repair

Hello from the land of lizards and dust blizzards. After arriving here amidst a two-day dust storm I looked around and thought that this place could really use some artwork to liven up the scenery.

One day we had some left over concrete so I made a Wadi Monkey, which I put in front of the “can” where I live. (I’ve heard rumors that we’re not supposed to run alone next to the Wadi because of possible encounters with Wadi Monkeys.) A lot of people got a kick out of the Wadi Monkey so I thought of making another creation.

SWC (SW) Wylie Carroll suggested that I make a snowman. Since most Seabees in our battalion come from snow country, I thought maybe a snowman could help us think cooler during the intense Iraqi heat.



The nine foot high concrete snowman has become a morale booster for troops in the area. Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines pause on their way through to have their photo taken in front of the two-ton statue.

I made Crusty out of left over concrete from our jobsite. The truck driver dumped out the excess concrete and I had to work hard and fast to create Crusty.

I roughed out a shape of a snowman with concrete tools. I already had rocks set aside for his nose, teeth, and buttons. It hardened up pretty quick, so I had to create the facial features later on with a little grout. Finally, I spray painted the entire figure. He’s over 9 feet tall and I’m guessing weighs over two tons.

My artwork often looks funny at first glance, but it has a deeper meaning underneath. (like editorial cartoons.) I

decided to use Crusty to hopefully plant a seed of good will, after all, the Seabee Memorial in Washington D.C. says, “With compassion for others, we build we fight for peace with freedom.”

So, relating to that theme, I gave Crusty a sign which says “Fight the Good Fight” with the address of scriptures underneath which relate to overcoming evil by doing good to our enemies. I also included a quote from the apostle Paul stating that he had “fought the good fight.”

After getting permission from the commanding officer, BU1 Steve Burmesch and BU3 Sean Congdon and myself began working night ops to install the snowman at the Seabee compound.

Since then, many people have expressed their affection for Crusty. Anyone manning the gate watch has routinely seen Marines and soldiers stop by to have their picture taken in front of Crusty. Hopefully he’ll be around a while – at least until he melts. 🌨️



Schrepfer has an art degree from Illinois Central College and has made other concrete “critters” for his kids and a nephew, which he calls concreatures.

Battle Position Improvement Mission

by CEC (SC) Dan Delaney

In mid-May the Battalion got a mission to renovate the Battle Positions (BP) of 1/7 Marines near Al Qaim, Iraq. The Marines at most of the BPs had no air conditioning or showers and had unreliable / insufficient electrical power. With the summer heat fast approaching (120 degrees), it was essential for the mission to start as soon as possible. Based out of Al Qaim, the Seabees from NMCB-25 went to work quickly.


They started on the first BP in late May as soon as they received the construction materials and tools necessary for the mission. Originally scheduled for a late September completion date, the crews were augmented by additional personnel from the battalion and found innovative ways to shorten the construction tasks.

Life at the BP's is certainly an interesting experience. The Seabee work crews would put up their lodging tent and sleep at the BP's with the rest of the Marines and Iraqi Army troops until that BP was completed. The Seabees worked long hours in the heat of the day. They took showers (using small water bottles) and wet wipe baths, ate Meals-Ready-to-Eat (MRE's), used four-hole burnouts (similar to an old style camp ground out-house) and slept in the heat like the Marines and Iraqi Army troops.

Some of the more established BP's had hot food, but for the most part it was MRE's for breakfast, lunch and dinner. On many occasions, the Seabee crews would forgo the air conditioning in their own sleeping quarters and make sure the Marine and Iraqi Army troops got the air conditioning first.

During construction, many off duty Marines and Iraqi Army troops helped the Seabee crews perform labor-intensive tasks. This helped make the project go faster and build cooperation, understanding and relationships between the Seabees, Marines and Iraqi Army troops – key to a successful U.S. / Iraqi future.

The Seabee crews made improvements at the BP that many of us take for granted in our normal daily routine: electrical power, showers (with running water), sinks for shaving and brushing teeth, air conditioning units (with heat for the winter), and improving the structural stability of the lodging quarters. These improvements have made an immeasurable impact on the living conditions for troops at the BP's.

The Marines continued to comment on the vast skills the Seabees had, their average age, and the work ethics of the crews. The Marines and Iraqi Army troops at the BP were often sad at the completion of the projects, because it meant the Seabees would be moving on. They understood however, that the Seabees were going to another BP to make the same improvements for their fellow Marines and Iraqi Army troop counterparts. 

*See related story, page 45.



Battle Position Detachment: (front) CE1 Larry Tabita, BU1 (SCW) Vincent Del Signore , BU2 Ken Steichen , BU1 Michael McMahon, EOC (SCW) (sel) William Kirsch, SW1 Byrce Greer, EO1 Greg Hucker, CE2 Marc Cover, UT1 Michael Pelletier , CE2 (SCW) Jason Baertsch , CE2 Ge Yang , EO1 Brian Tammi (back) BU1 Gaylon Heinrich, UT1 (SCW) Michael Rohde, UT2 John Shelton, SW1 (SCW) Jesse Vanloo, SW1 Marc Thompson, BU2 Mark Manes, BU1 Joseph Harden, BU1 (SCW) Sammy Norman, CEC (SCW/SW) Dan Delaney, CE1 Douglas Hoepfner, BU1 Troy Merry, CECN (SCW) Jason Nash, BU2 Chad Bartman, CE2 Eric Westlund, CE2 Christopher Stevens, BU1 Mathew Hensel, CM1 Frederick Reinke, UT3 Justin Nimrick, BU1 Jerold Jenks, BUC Scott Seligman, UT2 Russell Sanborn, (not pictured: EO3 Casey Buelteman)

Seabees complete repairs on Iraqi runway

AL ANBAR PROVINCE, Iraq - Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25), Fort McCoy, Wis., completed concrete work on a major runway before returning home from their deployment this fall. The laying of concrete into the final expansion joint marked the end of runway repairs. Seabees worked over six days a week throughout their deployment to accomplish this goal.

"This is a major runway," said Senior Chief Builder (SCW) Timothy Cooper, project Operations Chief. The end of work on this strip marks the completion of extensive concrete repair operations.

Repairs were badly needed on the old runway because broken pieces of concrete were a hazard to aircraft tires and jet engines. "You see this type of repair all the time on the interstates," said Builder 2nd Class (SCW) Mark Rasett. "Concrete sections expand against one another and you'll see where it breaks off along the edges of the joint. We've removed the damaged joints and replaced them with new ones."

The labor-intensive process involved cutting through 14 inches of concrete on each side of the damaged joints. The old concrete was carefully lifted out with a track excavator and the underlying dirt was then compacted.

"Seabee work is construction, and this is a part of it – a lot of pouring concrete and repairing of runways,"




Seabees work quickly while laying concrete into an expansion joint. During runway repairs, Seabees laid tons of concrete, installed over thousands of dowels, and cut miles of runway.



A Seabee equipment operator illuminates an expansion joint shortly before concrete trucks arrive. This September, Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25) completed concrete repairs on a runway in Al Anbar Province.

said Cooper. "We have equipment operators, steel workers, builders, engineering aides, construction electricians, utilitiesman, and construction mechanics in the battalion. Together we make a pretty good construction firm. We can do just about anything that we need to do to complete vertical and horizontal construction projects and repair the equipment we use."

It's kind of like the early Seabees from World War II," said Builder 1st Class Frederick Schrepfer. "We've got good people with construction skills. Before we put them to work, we taught them how to use weapons to defend themselves. We're the Seabees. We build, we fight." 

Base Services Tackles a Unique Problem for an Iraqi General

Getting professional tradesman quickly to your door in the United States can be challenging. Getting them to assist you when you're in the Iraqi, and a member of the Iraqi Forces, is a story in itself.

For an Iraqi general and his staff, who were trying to make the most of a new training facility in the Al Anbar Province, the problem was most basic. The Iraqi training team had been working in the area for some time, but was having trouble getting professional tradesmen to assist them with the installation of an abolition unit, which was presented to the general as a gift much earlier. The unit, (which is basically a large restroom and shower facility), was upscale, but it was designed for a readily available source of electricity and water – which weren't available.

Seabees from Naval Mobile Constructors Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25) were asked to assist the general. After surveying the scope of the project and materials at the site, the Seabees decided it was a job they could support. During their deployment, members of the Base Services department have been assisting coalition forces with their equipment problems.

Seabees admitted that this project was a little unusual. "A few other people had tried, but couldn't complete this project," said UTC (SCW) Darren Kotajarvi, NMCB-25 Base Services. "Over two months had



CDR David Marasco, Commanding Officer, NMCB-25 and an Iraqi general communicate through the use of an interpreter. The Iraqi general personally thanked each Seabee who worked on the construction project and gave each of them a letter of commendation.

passed with the unit just sitting there."

"It took a bit of engineering to make the unit work because of the location of where it's at – in the middle of the desert," said Kotajarvi. "It was designed to have a constant water flow and power system."

Seabees in the base services department are full time construction workers in the civilian sector and are used to construction challenges.

The project wasn't notable for its size, or the scope of engineering involved, but because it bridged the cultural gap between Seabees and Iraqis at the site – while directly supporting the mission.

"There was a lot of interaction between the Iraqi guards and the Seabees during the project," said Kotajarvi. "We were teaching each other how to count in the other's

language. We brought the guards a new soccer ball toward the end of the project because the one they had was worn out. They were pretty happy about that."

It took almost three days, but nine Seabees managed to install a gray water and fresh water tank to help overcome the water issue. They also installed a hot water system, water feeder, air conditioning system, and sinks. As an added project, the Seabees also hooked up the drainage and kitchen sinks to the general's conference room.

When the Iraqi general returned just days after the Seabees finished, he was so pleased with the success of the project that he invited CDR David Marasco, commanding officer of NMCB-25, and the Seabees to his conference room.

Through an interpreter, the general personally thanked the Seabees for their support and presented each Seabee who was attached to the Base Services department with a letter of commendation.

Many Seabees said that this experience was personally rewarding because they knew their work was directly helping the Iraqi forces - forces that are responsible for the training of fellow Iraqi soldiers. For these skilled Seabees, having an Iraqi general go out of his way to personally express his gratitude was something they will never forget. 